

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee** held at County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 4 June 2008** at **10.00 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor J Armstrong in the Chair

Members:

Councillors B Alderson, J Armstrong, B Arthur, B Avery, J Blakey, D Boyes, R Burnip, M Campbell, J Chaplow, A Hopgood, D Maddison, N Martin, J Moran, E Murphy, D Myers, B Ord, R Ord, C Potts, P Stradling, G Tennant and K Thompson.

Other Members:

Councillors A Bainbridge, B Bainbridge, A Bell, D Bowman, C Carr, E Dixon, D Freeman, K Holroyd, B Myers, L O'Donnell, R Rodgers, Allen Turner, Andrew Turner, C Walker, A Willis, and A Wright.

Faith Communities Rep:

Mrs M Sands.

Parent/Governor Rep:

Mrs A M Tallentire.

Co-opted Member:

Mr B Birch.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fergus, Stoker and Southwell, and Mrs L Bailey.

A1 Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Committee.

A2 Terms of Reference

The Committee noted the Report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny regarding the Terms of Reference of the Committee, its Membership and Dates of Meetings (for copy see file of Minutes).

A3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

A4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

A5 Overview of Local Area Agreement, Sustainable Communities Strategy, The Corporate Plan, and Performance Framework

The Committee received a presentation from Donna Jefferson, Senior Corporate Policy & Performance Officer which gave an Overview of the Local Area Agreement, The County Durham Sustainable Community Strategy, the Corporate Plan, and Performance Framework (for copy of slides of presentation see file of Minutes)

Her presentation included national and regional strategies, the new agenda, strategy development, identification of priorities, key partnership principles and the county council mission, outcomes focus, key themes in the Corporate Plan, performance framework, next steps, Corporate Assessment, and Action 2008/09.

Mr Birch suggested that as there are some cases where the performance figures look poor when in fact they are good, a caveat should be provided to explain further about the indicators. He gave the example of the number of reported cases of domestic violence increasing, and although that this may be seen as poor performance in fact it was good that the number of cases being reported had increased.

In response to Councillor B Ord raising a question about the frequency of bins being emptied, Donna Jefferson explained that the policy on waste collection in the county varies at the moment, however with the unitary authority there would be one policy and consultation with the public would take place.

A6 Work towards a Unitary Authority

The Committee received a presentation from Roger Goodes, Senior Programme Manager, LGR Programme which gave an update on the work towards a Unitary Authority (for copy of slides of presentation see file of Minutes).

His presentation included the significant organisational challenge facing the new unitary authority, the process, CLG expectations, programme structure, workstream priorities, work with Cabinet, the priorities over the coming months, and the challenges ahead.

Members discussed at length the input that Overview and Scrutiny could make into the decisions to be made by the Cabinet on the way forward for the Authority. There were to be number of workshops where the Cabinet was to meet to shape the way forward. It was noted that Overview and Scrutiny would be invited to the workshop on 15 July, and then on 23 July there would be a Special Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to discuss Vision and Values. It was accepted that there is to be a distinction between Cabinet making decisions and Overview and Scrutiny looking at the decisions made. It was felt that members particularly The Chairman and Vice-Chairman be invited to the workshops to observe. These comments would be taken back to the Executive.

A7 Overview and Scrutiny Forward Plan

The Committee received a presentation from Councillor J Armstrong, The Chairman and Feisal Jassat, Head of Overview and Scrutiny on the Forward Plan (for copy of slides of presentation see file of Minutes)

The presentation included legislative change, Policy/Strategic Direction, Approach, Impact, Focus of the Work Programme, delivery mechanism, and capacity to deliver.

It was reported that the Annual Council meeting will provide the opportunity for the Committee to respond to the LAA review. They will be initiating more arrangements on scrutinising the LAA, and will be speaking to the Governance Group to see how they could deliver on that.

Councillor Wright referred to the question she had raised at the former Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities Sub-Committee about the number of young people in the criminal justice system, and although she had received some information on this she believed that they had not looked at it in enough detail in order to make recommendations to Cabinet. The Chairman advised that members could expect some positive information on that in the near future.

In response to a question from Councillor B Ord concerning the loss of manufacturing jobs and whether the Committee would look at industrial development, the Chairman advised that this was being looked at as part of one of the workstreams.

A8 Evaluation of Overview and Scrutiny

The Committee received a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny regarding an Evaluation of Overview and Scrutiny in County Durham facilitated by Phil Thompson, PhD Student, Northumbria University (for copy of report see file of Minutes)

Phil Thompson gave a presentation to the Committee on the work he had undertaken (for copy of slides of presentation see file of Minutes). His presentation included the reasons for the evaluation, the aims and objectives, how it was undertaken, sources of data, the findings, development opportunities /priorities for the new unitary authority, and recommendations.

The Chairman congratulated Phil Thompson on an excellent piece of work.

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny advised that they were attempting to implement 70% of the recommendations in the report. He would however report formally at the next meeting on how his report would be used to further the development of scrutiny in County Durham.

Feisal Jassat pointed out that over the past 18 months there has been a County Durham Overview and Scrutiny Network which had included members from District Councils and this would continue in order to share best practice. Phil would report back to the network in July on the work he had undertaken.

A9 Forward Plan

The Committee received the Forward Plan of items to be considered by the Cabinet (for copy of report see file of Minutes)

Councillor Hopgood asked that when the Forward Plan was presented to the Committee in the future, for those items that appear on the Plan for the first time could further explanation be given of that issue.